
City of Reading City Council

Regular Meeting Monday, December 8, 2008

A regular meeting of City Council was held on the above date for the transaction of general business.

Vaughn D. Spencer, President of Council, called the meeting to order.

The invocation was given by Rev. Dr. Sandra Fees, of the First United Unitarian Church. She thanked City Council for their work to serve and protect Reading residents.

All present pledged to the flag.

ATTENDANCE

Council President Spencer
Councilor Fuhs, District 1
Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, District 2
Councilor Sterner, District 3
Councilor Marmarou, District 4
Councilor Baez, District 5
City Auditor D. Cituk
City Solicitor, C. Younger
Mayor, T. McMahon
Managing Director, R. Hottenstein
City Clerk L. Kelleher
Public Works Director C. Jones
Sgt at Arms Capt R. Shafer
Chief of Police, W. Heim

PROCLAMATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

City Council issued a Council commendation to Reading High School Student Andrew Katzenmoyer, celebrating his leadership and outstanding abilities. Mr. Katzenmoyer was selected to participate in the Great American Marching Band,

who appeared in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Mr. Katzenmoyer also participated in the Great American Tour Band, who traveled and appeared in cities around Europe during this past summer.

Council President Spencer stated that City Council is proud to honor Mr. Katzenmoyer as he is a student who continually goes above and beyond bringing honor to the City of Reading.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council President Spencer announced that five citizens were registered to address Council this evening. He stated that one citizen is registered to address agenda matters and four are registered to address non-agenda matters. He inquired if any Councilor objected to suspending the rules to all allow all public comment to occur at this point in the meeting. As no one objected all citizens were allowed to address Council now rather than after the legislative business is concluded.

Council President Spencer reminded those registered to speak about the remaining speaking rules.

Lydell Gehris- of the Greater Reading Young Professionals an employee of Security of First, expressed her belief in a creation of a PRD overlay as it will expand opportunities for economic development and revitalize the City of Reading.

Leon McDevitt- of Shillington, noted that the City has recently been touting the reduction in crime statistics. He asked all to recall the death of an on duty police officers a half block away from City Hall and the recent upspring in violent crimes including shootings, stabbings, and vandalism, citywide. He expressed the belief that criminal activity is supported by the actions and attitudes of overly liberal judges and psychologists.

Angel Figueroa- of Queens Court, noted the difficulties the part-time Council has grappling with the sizeable City budget and budget issues. He expressed the belief that today's financial problems have been brewing for approximately 16 years. He noted his optimism for the future of the country and the City. He suggested discussing City issues with former members of City Council.

Chief of Police William Heim- stated that Police Budget is currently set at \$25.5

million. He stated that City Council has directed that 4% be cut across the board for all City Departments. He stated that the police budget has personnel cost set at approximately \$23 million and he noted that he, as the director of the police department, cannot make the requested 4% reduction without hampering operations. He noted the low ratio of non-uniformed support to the police department, which affects their operations and drives their costs higher. He expressed the belief that the 4% reduction will hinder, the public safety advancement made under the past few years.

Mary Ann Ciarlone- of North 5th Street, requested a copy of the City's Property Inspection Policy and Standard Operating Procedure for forced entry inspections.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Council President Spencer called Council's attention to the agenda for this meeting and to the minutes from the November 24th Regular Meeting of Council. He noted that the approval of the agenda will include the Resolution listed under the Consent Agenda Heading. He announced to amend the agenda to introduce an Ordinance that will set the property tax levy at its current rate.

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz, to approve the agenda as amended, including the legislation listed under the Consent Agenda heading and the minutes from the November 24th Regular Meeting of Council. The motion was approved unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Mayor McMahon stated that the City is facing the most severe financial crisis perhaps in the entire lifetime of the City. He noted that one time fixes can no longer be used. He stated that the City's elected officials must find income and revenue streams that work in today's economy. He stated that he vetoed the 5% property tax increase as it was too minimal to support City services. He stated that without support for his proposed property tax and earned income tax rates the City will find itself with a \$20 million deficit in 2010. He stated that drastic lay-offs will be needed. He noted the need for Council and the Administration to work together to consider tax choices. He stated that the Administration will work to take the best advantage of our assets such as the regionalization of the sewer and water functions. He stated that the Administration will also work to

obtain support for our City's park and library system. He again suggested that Council and the Administration work together to keep the City financially afloat.

Mayor McMahon also reported on the following:

- 1 Implementation of the downtown security cameras.
- 2 Centre Park Historic District's 24th Annual Christmas House Tour on Sunday, December 14th.
- 3 College Heights Community Council's meeting on Sunday, December 14th.

Councilor Sterner stated that City Council will continue to work with the Mayor to find a compromise on the 2009 budget. He noted the need to discuss pension reform with the state legislators. He noted that cities across the Commonwealth can no longer afford police and fire services. He suggested that the City consider a regional approach.

AUDITOR'S REPORT

City Auditor Dave Cituk stated that attached to his report is an audit of the capital project to renovate the Pagoda. He stated that the funding for this project came from the City's line of credit, not the revenue realized through the sale of Antietam to the County. City Auditor Cituk described the shift in Capital Project Funding.

Councilor Fuhs thanked City Auditor Cituk for completing the audit and added that the construction of the Lancaster Avenue Firehouse was to be funded by the line of credit not the Pagoda Project.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired if the Pagoda Capital Project was included in the Capital Program Budget. Managing Director Hottenstein replied affirmatively. He stated that the project will be completed under its projected cost. Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that the City is only funding the first phase of the renovation. Mayor McMahon stated that the City is applying for state grants to assist with the remainder of the project.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that the administration provide a detailed update at the January Public works Committee Meeting.

Mayor McMahon asked Public Works Director Jones to provide an update on the

installation of the new guide rails on Duryea Drive.

Public Works Director Jones stated that Penn DOT now requires that guiderails be made of steel. He stated that the department has selected a steel product that has a rusted appearance that will compliment the environment. He stated that the department will also install new guide rails on the road that joins Clymer Street and North 13th Street.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the perfect appearance of the material used. She also noted the recent appearance of a tent like structure off Duryea Drive and requested that the City investigate this issue further.

Councilor Sterner stated that the City's current budget restraints will require the Administration to find a different stream of funding to continue the Pagoda Project. He stated that he supports the project but asked that the Administration reconsider the project costs.

Mayor McMahon stated that the Antietam revenue will not cover the cost of the Pagoda and City Park renovation projects.

Council President Spencer inquired why Wayne Wright of Greater Berks Development has been named as project manager for the Pagoda Project. Mayor McMahon replied that Mr. Wright has volunteered as project manager. He also noted the support Greater Berks Development has given to the Pagoda Project. He noted his friendship with Ed Swoyer Director of Greater Berks Development and the beneficial relationship between himself and Greater Berks.

REPORT FROM BOARD'S AUTHORITIES AND COMMISSIONS

Vicky Krall, chair of the Legislative Aide Committee, stated that the Committee was established in 2002 to review, research and update existing legislation, draft new legislation, and make amendment recommendations to City Council. She stated that the group works closely with the City Clerk and is strictly advisory. She stated that the Legislative Aide Committee has assisted with the development and amendment of various City Ordinances such as:

- 1 Charter Board Ordinance
- 2 Ethics Board Ordinance
- 3 Animal Control Ordinance
- 4 Board of Health and Citizen Inspection Program
- 5 Blighted Property Review Committee

Ms. Krall also stated that the Committee has also reviewed revisions to various ordinances such as: outdoor air policy, dumpster placement, parking of trucks and recreational vehicles, park and recreation trust fund.

Ms. Krall stated that the Committee has recently reviewed and drafted briefs on two recent state laws HB2188, covering abandoned and blighted properties and HB2499, which establishes a licensing procedure for message therapy.

Ms. Krall stated that two of the newest Committee members have valuable experience as they work in the office of State Legislators. She stated that serving on the Legislative Aide Committee has been personally rewarding and encouraged others to volunteer their time on the City' Board's, Authorities, and Commissions.

Councilor Sterner thanked the Legislative Aide Committee for their diligent work.

Councilor Fuhs echoed these sentiments and thanked for the Committee for their work to assist City Council.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the value of citizen input when legislation is drafted and amended.

Council President Spencer thanked Ms. Krall personally, noting that she has done a fabulous job as chair of the Legislative Aide Committee.

ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

Bill No 77-2008 - Establishing the Full-Time Employee positions & salaries for the City of Reading for the fiscal year 2009. *Introduced at the October 1 Special Meeting; Tabled on Nov 24th*

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz moved, seconded by Councilor Fuhs, to table Bill 77-2008.

Bill 77-2008 was tabled by the following vote:

Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Spencer

President – 6.

Nay: None – 0

Council President Spencer referred this bill to the Committee of the Whole.

Bill No 81-2008 - establishing policies to facilitate requests for public records of the City of Reading, the manner in which records shall be disseminated, the manner in which decisions shall be made concerning dissemination of public records, and establishing a fee schedule for duplication and certification of public records of the City of Reading **(Council Staff)** *Introduced at the November 24 regular meeting*

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Councilor Baez, to enact Bill 81-2008.

Council President Spencer stated that Council Staff drafted this Ordinance after attending training sessions on the requirements to comply with the State's Right to Know Statute. He stated that the state requires cities across the Commonwealth to implement these standards by January 1st 2009.

Bill 81-2008 was enacted by the following vote:

**Yea: Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Spencer
President – 6.**

Nay: None – 0

INTRODUCTION OF NEW ORDINANCES

Ordinance - to adopt an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance under the authority of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, which adds a Planned Residential Development (PRD) overlay called the "RR Riverfront Redevelopment Overlay Zoning District" and to apply the new district to lands from the centerline of the Schuylkill River to areas to the east and northeast of the river, including areas generally south and southwest of Franklin St, along both sides of S. 2nd St. and Riverfront Dr., and along both sides of Canal Street including areas south of Laurel St., south of Willow St., west of S. 7th St. and north of South St. and as shown in more detail on the attached RR zoning

overlay district map (**Solicitor**)

Ordinance – setting the property tax levy at its current level for the 2009 calendar year.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 126-2008 - extending the application deadline for mobile food vendors from December 1 to January 16 and extending the Vendor License Board's review and approval of mobile food vendors to February 27 (**Council Staff**) *Meeting w/ Vendor Group held Nov 25th, Next Meeting scheduled for Dec 10th*

Councilor Baez moved, seconded by Councilor Fuhs, to adopt Resolution 126-2008.

Council President Spencer stated that a task force has been organized and is meeting to review and discuss the proposed amendments to the Mobile Food Vendor Ordinance. He stated that this last deadline extension will allow the task force to complete their work and make a final recommendation to City Council.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the good progress made at the task force meeting.

Resolution 126-2008 was adopted by the following vote:

Yea- Baez, Fuhs, Goodman-Hinnershitz, Marmarou, Sterner, Spencer – President-6

Nay- None - 0

COUNCIL COMMENT

Councilor Fuhs expressed the belief that the City's collective bargaining units

will need to be a team payer as the City considers budget reductions.

Councilor Fuhs stated that the Administration and Council continue to work to define an acceptable forced entry inspection standard operating procedure.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for Council and the Administration to continue to work on the City's financial issues.

Councilor Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the availability of quality collectibles at the Pagoda. She described the event at the Pagoda over the past weekend.

Councilor Marmarou noted his receipt of complaints regarding the new pedestrian crossing signs appearing on North 13th Street near Albright College. He noted that the signs were placed out without the City's approval. Mayor McMahon stated that these pedestrian crossing signs are also used at Southern Middle School and RACC.

Councilor Marmarou noted their poor positioning makes turns problematic.

Captain Schaeffer and Public Works Director Jones stated that these pedestrian crossing signs are approved for use on state highways. Public Works Director Jones stated that he investigated the use of the pedestrian crossing signs around Albright College and expressed the belief that too many signs are located in the street.

Councilor Sterner thanked tonight's public speakers for providing their input.

Councilor Sterner reminded all citizens of the Hillside Holiday Light display.

Mayor McMahon suggested that the Administration and Council consider using an advisory panel similar to that used by the Reading School District several years ago.

Council President Spencer and City Clerk Kelleher reminded the Mayor that Council suggested activating such a panel earlier this year. Council wished the panel to be composed of a combination of business owners and Reading residents. The Administration's reluctance to include Reading residents on the panel stalled out the panel's creation.

Mayor McMahon requested an update on the LRA (Local Redevelopment

Authority) organized to oversee the reuse of the Navy Marine Center located on Kenhorst Boulevard.

Council President Spencer explained that the LRA has just completed the request for proposal (RFP) process to hire a consultant who will assist the LRA in drafting the re-use plan. He stated that representatives from the LRA will travel to Washington D.C. to meet with HUD officials in January. After the contract for the LRA Consultant is completed a kick-off meeting will occur to define the remainder of the project and set a Public Meeting Schedule.

Council President Spencer noted the importance of holding public meetings with affected residents throughout the final stages of the LRA process and to obtain the affected communities input on reuse of this parcel.

Council President Spencer noted the article in the Reading Eagle on the Union Town financial woes. He stated that Union Town has a \$7 million budget and recently laid off 30 of their 80 employees. He noted the similar problems here in Reading.

Council President Spencer reviewed Council's upcoming meeting schedule.

Councilor Marmarou moved, seconded by Councilor Fuhs, to adjourn the regular meeting of Council.

Linda Kelleher, City Clerk